



Faculty experiences with adult learners in service-learning: A study and a guide

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Summary

The purpose of the study is to articulate promising practices for practitioners utilizing service-learning as an educational pedagogy with adult students by documenting their experiences and practical knowledge from the classroom. An accompanying *Practitioner's Guide* will explicitly tie the research findings to concrete suggestions for faculty development and institutional support.

The study is an example of use-inspired research, in which the research partners include the participants who help frame the direction and outcome of the study. Since we are interested in the experiences of adult and nontraditional students as well as those who work with them, we also draw from the work of Malcolm Knowles, who notes that the learner at the center of a process of discovery and

self-actualization seeks acceptance and wholeness as a central value for knowledge. In this thinking, the learner's life experience is utilized for integration, not only as a source of knowledge but also as the content of the curriculum (Saddington, 1998, 2000).

The significance of this study is two-fold. First, it adds to the nascent literature on adult learners in service-learning contexts. It also bolsters current literature that suggests the life experiences of adult learners are important and meaningful sites of reflection, knowledge, and integration when utilized in an intentional way through service-learning. Second, the study forms the foundation for an effective *Practitioner's Guide* that will serve the needs of faculty working with adult and nontraditional learners.

Both the research and the *Practitioner's Guide* will be presented. The research will provide evidence that will help the field better understand faculty motivations and experiences in working with adult and nontraditional learners in community engagement and service-learning settings. The *Practitioner's Guide* will explicitly tie the research findings to concrete suggestions for faculty pedagogical development and institutional support.

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